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A Dead Lion?

AUGUST 11, 1965

PRESS-HERALD

E-3

Information Operators Answer All Questions

When an information operator says, "May I help you?" in response to a subscriber's dialing 113, the next few moments may simply be routine—or contain all the elements of pathos, tragedy, or divine comedy.

Yes, there's more to the information operator's job than sometimes meets the "ear." Local Pacific Telephone operators have often been instrumental in saving a person's

life, or directing a tourist to his destination or even suggesting places to visit while in Los Angeles.

Pacific Telephone employs 2,140 information operators in Los Angeles North and Central Areas who are on duty 24 hours a day and answer more than 540,000 requests for information on an average day.

called saying he wanted to report a "dead lion." At first shocked and then in a quandary as to what number she should give him, the operator finally decided on "rubbish collection." Realizing what had happened, the Texan exclaimed, "No, no, not a lion—my LINE, it's out of order!"

SKILLED operators sometimes can reply with the information requested before the subscriber has finished explaining what they want to know. Occasionally this can prove embarrassing as in a recent case. A lady had forgotten her husband's business telephone. The operator answered immediately without the customary "Just a moment please."

"My goodness," gasped the lady, "you know my husband's number better than I do!"

This may be hard on husbands but it is a tribute to the quick-on-the-trigger thinking of the operator and the efficiency and rapid delivery with which the telephone company dispatches telephone facts.

Law in Action

In most counties, property taxes, the oldest form of revenue, raise most of the money to run the county. For this reason protecting the "King's revenue" as it was called in England was a prime concern.

In California on the first Monday in March the county appraises and secures a lien for taxes on your property until you pay. Actually, that year's property taxes are not due until April and December following the lien date. The law adds interest and penalties for late payment.

EACH YEAR, usually in June, the tax collector publishes a delinquent list in the newspapers. The property is "sold" to the state for non-payment. This isn't a real sale, since the owner still stays on his property, can pay the back taxes, and wipe the "sale" off the books any time within five years.

But suppose five years go by and the owner does nothing to redeem his property. It can then be really and truly deeded to the state. The state takes over and can collect and keep the rents, crops, and other increments.

Before this takes place permanently the state usually brings a court action. The former owner is notified of the action and gets a last chance to redeem the property.

THE TAX collector may later sell the tax-deeded property at public auction to anyone, including the former owner.

JEWELL VOSS, Pacific's Information Bureau Manager in the Torrance area, says calls can be expedited when the subscriber gives the following information: The city of the desired number first (The operator can reach for the proper directory and be waiting for the name before you've finished supplying this bit of information); second, the last name of the person or business correctly spelled, and then the first name or initials and the address, if known.

The Los Angeles area requires each operator to have six directories at her fingertips. New numbers are routed to the information operators within several days of installation and each operator receives a completely new central area directory every two weeks.

Although an operator can handle approximately 80-90 calls requires only about 36 seconds. Many are expedited due to a "frequently called list," whose numbers account for 20 per cent of all queries. Periodically a poll is taken by operators who record all requests for business telephones in the area. Results are sent through the company's Data Processing Center which comes up with the most "asked-for" number in ranking order.

"CUSTOMERS would undoubtedly save themselves time — and money — if they would use their directories of- t-ener," says Mrs. Vosso. Proper enunciation also helps the information operators and would probably eliminate the occasional mistake resulting from her looking for an Elsie Gundo in place of El Segundo or Alma Cher- kee for Albuquerque.



WHAT? . . . Information operator Susan Parreko, employed in Pacific Telephone's Torrance office, is puzzled by a question put to her by a telephone user, Miss Parreko, one of Pacific's 2,140 information operators in Los Angeles, answers several hundred questions daily, some of which are far removed from the raison d'etre of an information operator.

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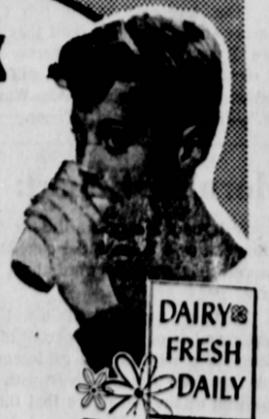
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